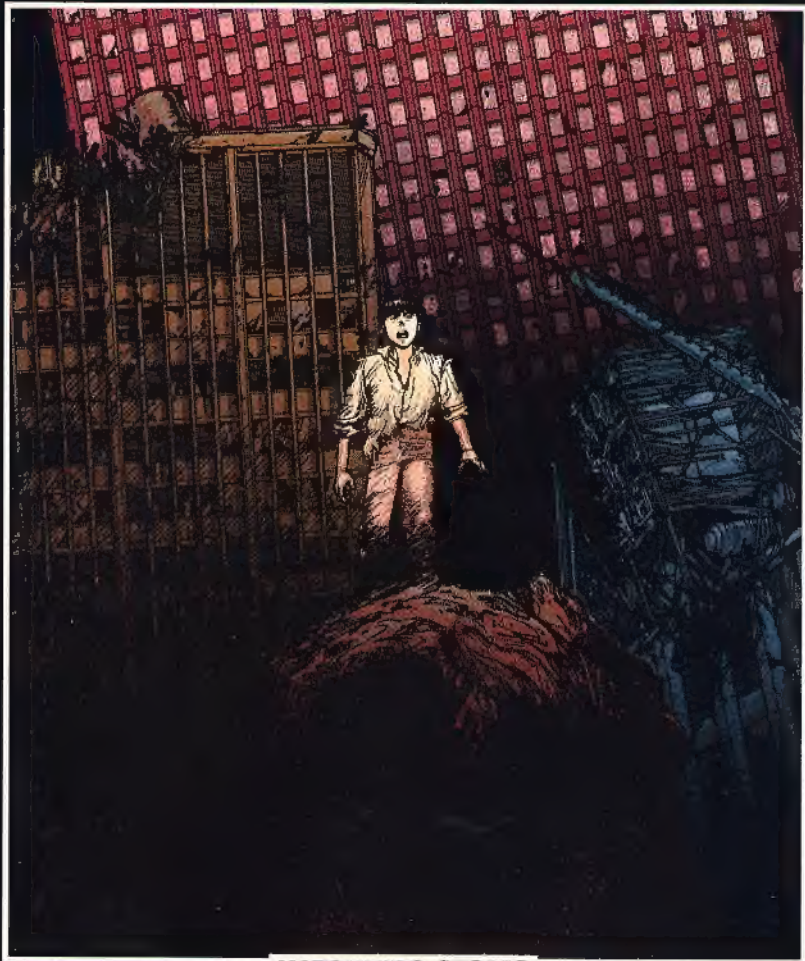


# AKIRA 1

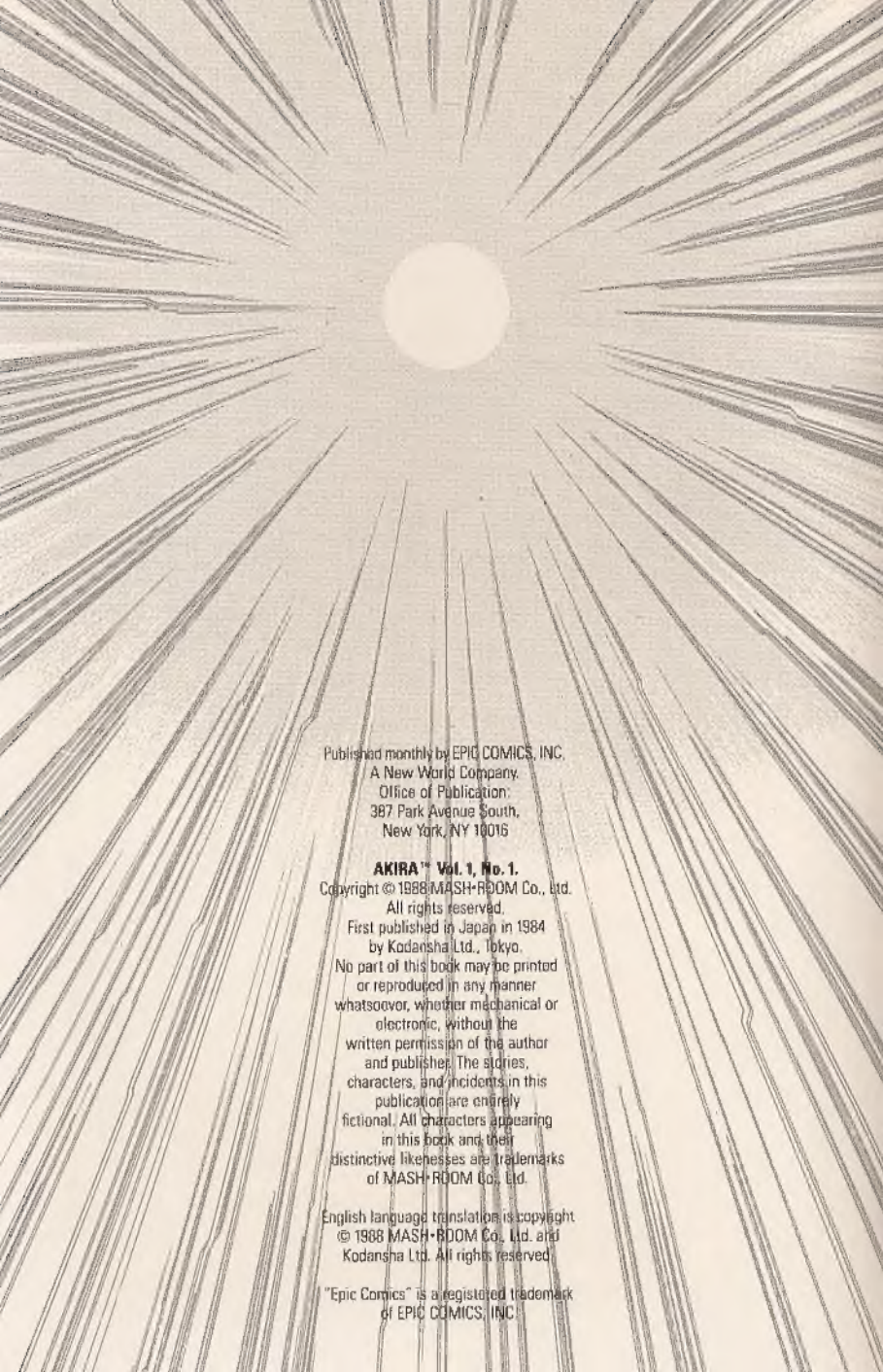
TM



EPIC COMICS® \$3.50 • \$4.75 CAN. • VOL. 1, NO. 1



KATSUHIRO OTOMO



Published monthly by EPIC COMICS, INC.  
A New World Company.  
Office of Publication:  
387 Park Avenue South,  
New York, NY 10015

**AKIRA™ Vol. 1, No. 1.**

Copyright © 1988 MASH•ROOM Co., Ltd.

All rights reserved.

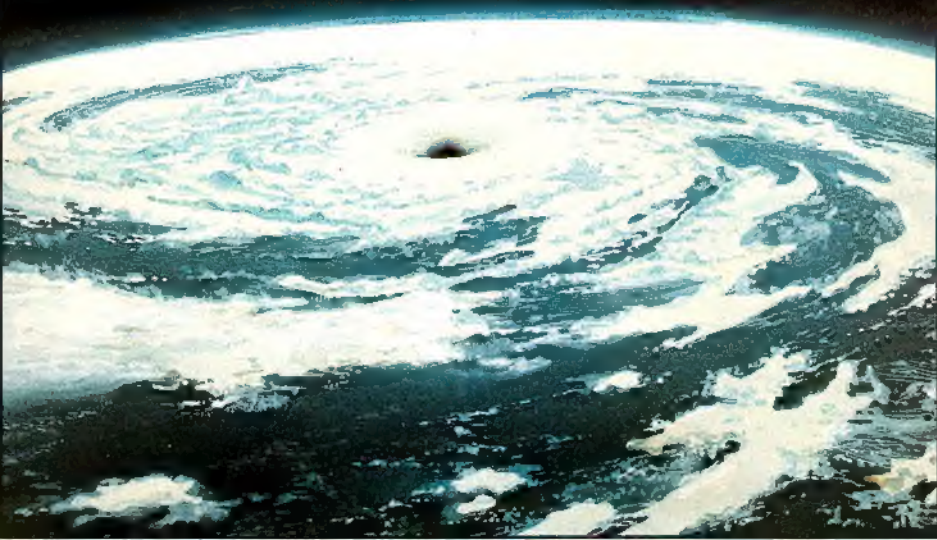
First published in Japan in 1984  
by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.

No part of this book may be printed  
or reproduced in any manner  
whatsoever, whether mechanical or  
electronic, without the  
written permission of the author  
and publisher. The stories,  
characters, and incidents in this  
publication are entirely  
fictional. All characters appearing  
in this book and their  
distinctive likenesses are trademarks  
of MASH•ROOM Co., Ltd.

English language translation is copyright  
© 1988 MASH•ROOM Co., Ltd. and  
Kodansha Ltd. All rights reserved.

"Epic Comics" is a registered trademark  
of EPIC COMICS, INC.

At 2:17 PM  
on December 6th,  
1992,  
a new type  
of bomb  
exploded  
over the  
metropolitan  
area of  
Japan.





# AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 1

THE HIGHWAY





Nine hours later,  
World War III began.

Leningrad, Moscow,  
Kazakhstan, Irkutsk,  
Vladivostok, San Francisco,  
Los Angeles, Washington, DC,  
New York, Okinawa,  
Berlin, Hamburg, Warsaw,  
London, Birmingham  
Paris, New Delhi...

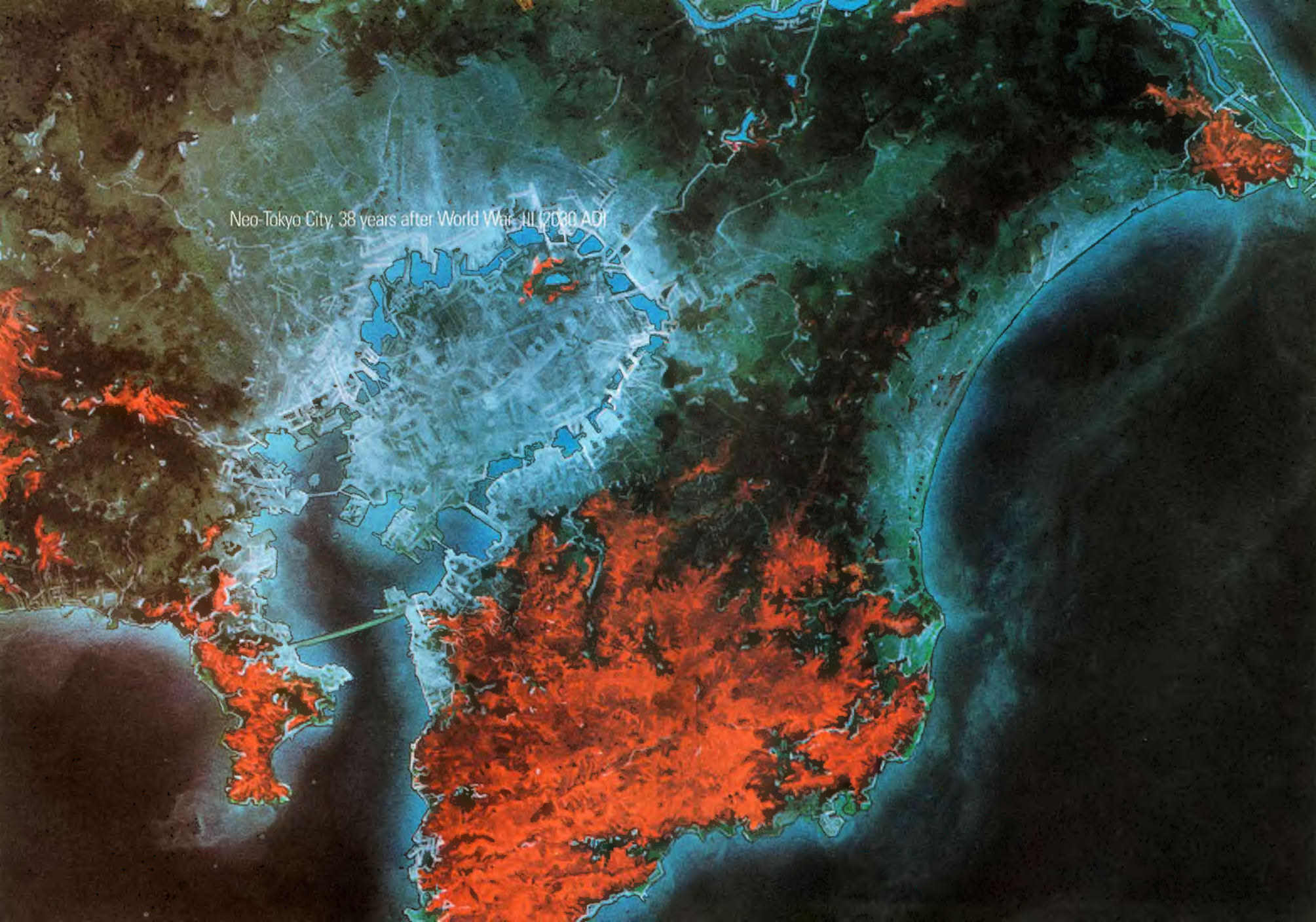


And the world began  
to rebuild.





Neo-Tokyo City, 38 years after World War III (2030 AD)







COME ON, YOU GUYS!  
WE'RE GONNA TAKE  
HIGHWAY 26 ALL THE WAY  
OVER TO THE OLD CITY--  
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN  
KEEP UP!



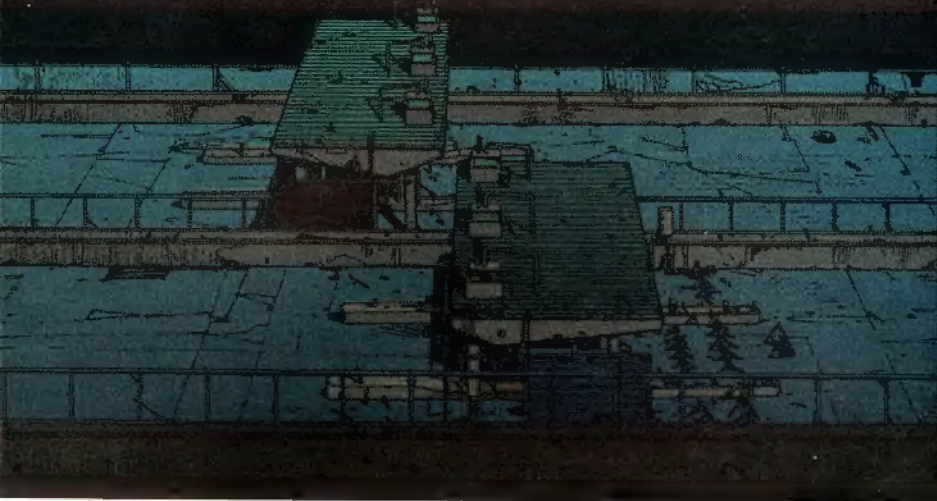
JUST LEAD  
THE WAY, KANEDA.  
WE'LL BE  
RIGHT BEHIND  
YOU.

STUDENTS AT THE YOUTH VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL, SOCIAL MISFITS WITH  
TOO LITTLE TO FILL THEIR LIVES, KANEDA AND HIS FRIENDS FOLLOW THE WILD  
PATH FROM THE CITY THAT STIFLES THEM...





...TO A SCENE OF UTTER DESOLATION THAT WAS ONCE BURSTING WITH LIFE.

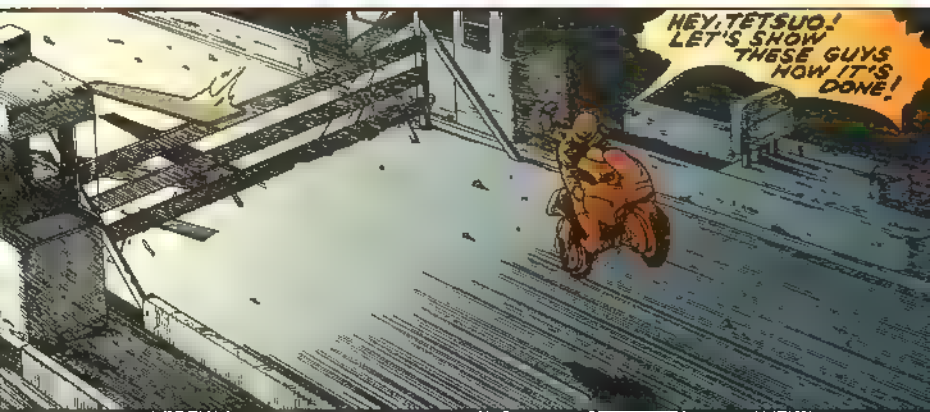








**VRRRRNNNNN**







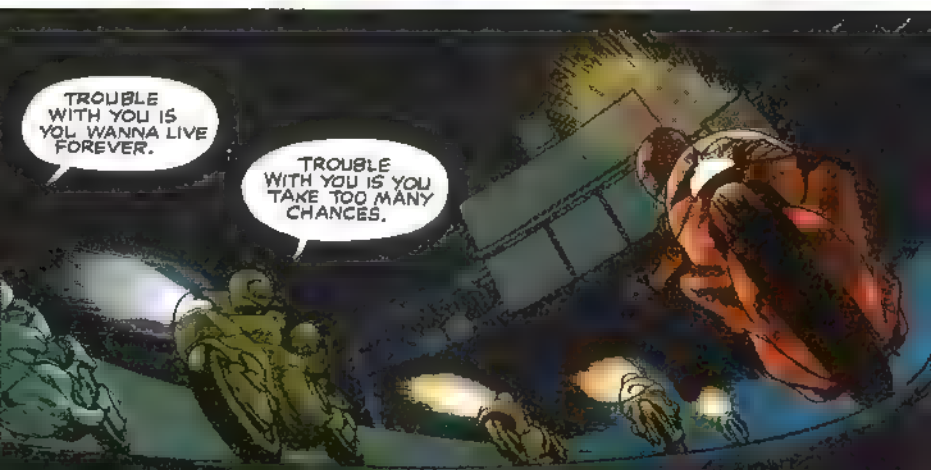
RIGHT  
BEHIND YOU,  
KANEDA.



I HEAR  
YOU TALKING  
BUT I DON'T SEE  
YOU CATCHING  
UP!

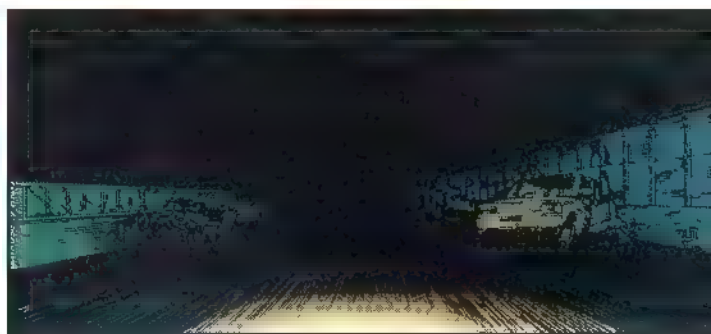


JUST WORRY ABOUT  
WHERE YOU'RE LEADING  
US, I CAN KEEP UP  
FINE.

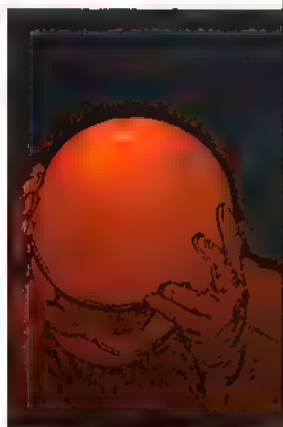
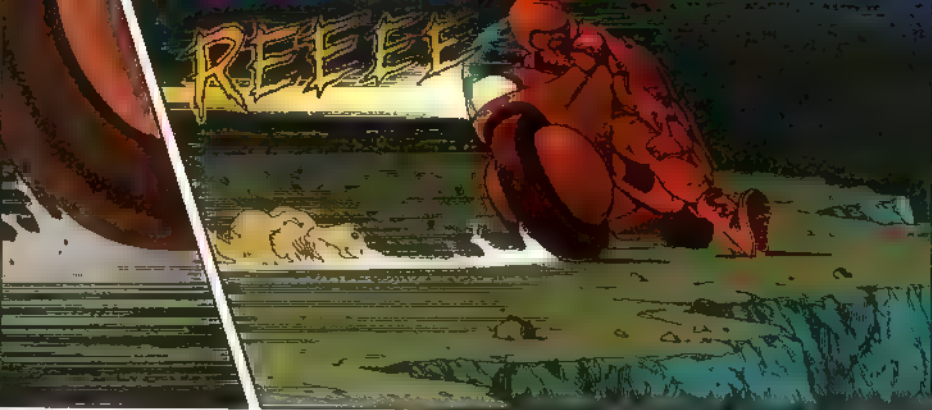


TROUBLE  
WITH YOU IS  
YOU WANNA LIVE  
FOREVER.

TROUBLE  
WITH YOU IS YOU  
TAKE TOO MANY  
CHANCES.









HEY,  
WE WERE  
JUST  
GETTING  
INTO IT...  
WHY'D  
WE  
STOP?

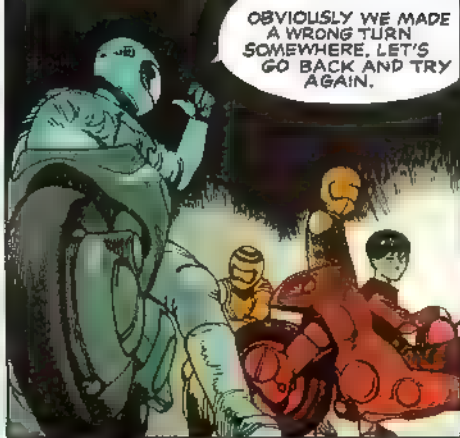
'CAUSE  
WE HIT  
A DEAD  
END,  
DUMMY.  
AND  
I DO  
MEAN  
DEAD.

THIS  
IS THE  
HEART  
OF ALL THE  
DESTRUCTION.  
WE'RE  
RIGHT AT  
THE PLACE  
WHERE THE  
BOMB  
FELL.

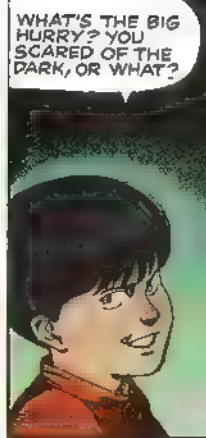




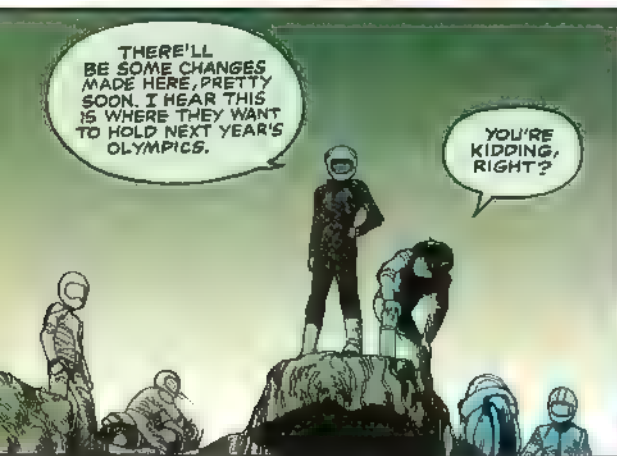
MAN, IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS THINKING OF ALL THE PEOPLE THAT DIED HERE



OBTUSIOUSLY WE MADE A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE. LET'S GO BACK AND TRY AGAIN.



WHAT'S THE BIG HURRY? YOU SCARED OF THE DARK, OR WHAT?



THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE HERE, PRETTY SOON. I HEAR THIS IS WHERE THEY WANT TO HOLD NEXT YEAR'S OLYMPICS.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?



THAT'S WHAT I HEARD... TELL HIM, TETSUO.

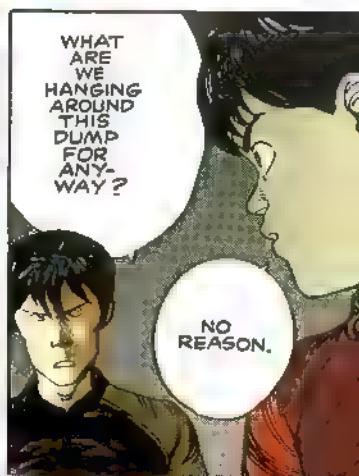


ME--?



IT'S THE TRUTH, KANEDA.

THEY ALREADY STARTED WORK ON IT. A BUNCH OF OLD BUILDINGS AND STUFF HAVE BEEN TORN DOWN AND EVERYTHING.

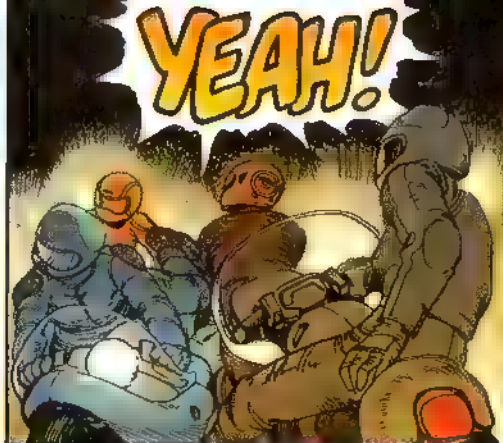


WHAT ARE WE HANGING AROUND THIS DUMP FOR ANYWAY?

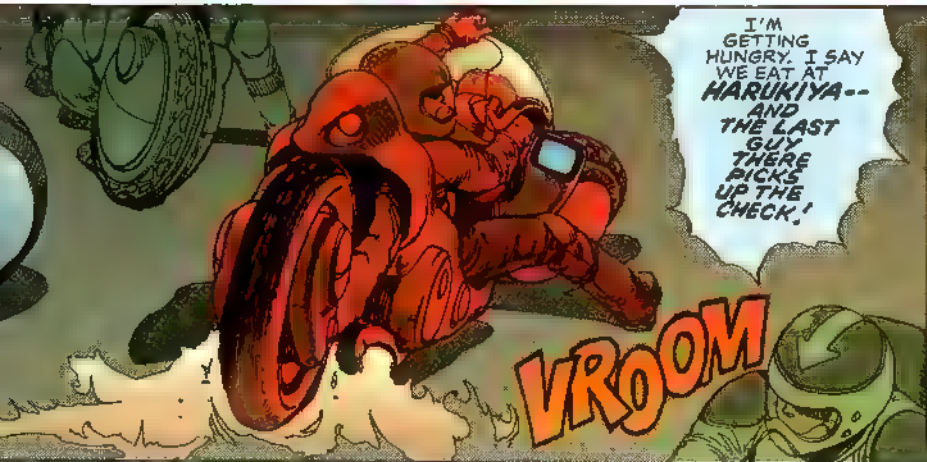
NO REASON.



COME  
ON!  
WE'RE  
OUTTA  
HERE!

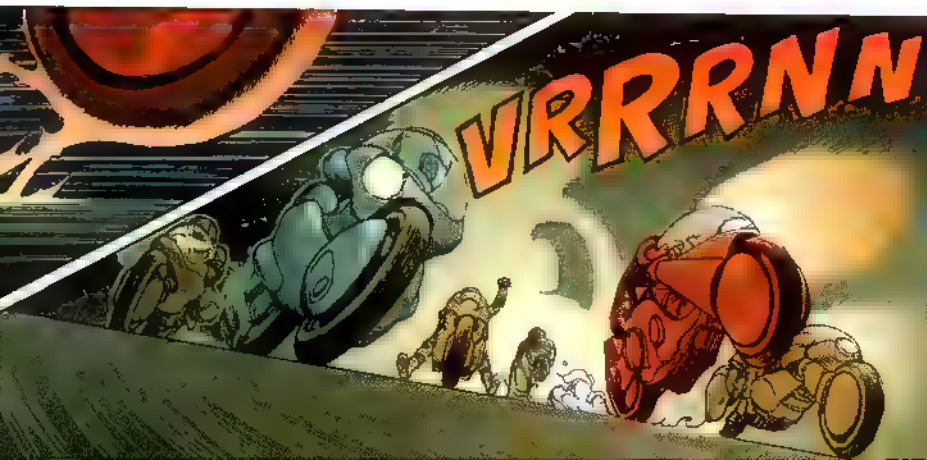


YEAH!



I'M  
GETTING  
HUNGRY. I SAY  
WE EAT AT  
**HARUKIYA--**  
AND  
THE LAST  
GUY  
THERE  
PICKS  
UP THE  
CHECK!

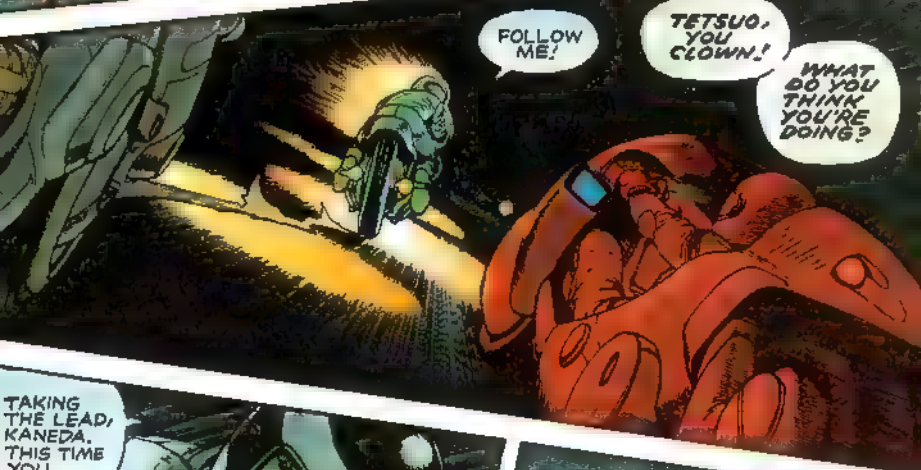
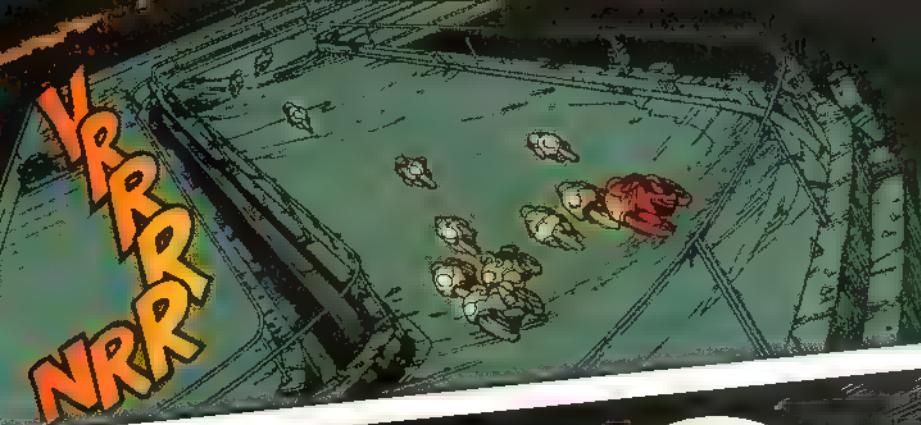
VROOM



VRRRNN



Y  
R  
R  
R  
N  
R  
R

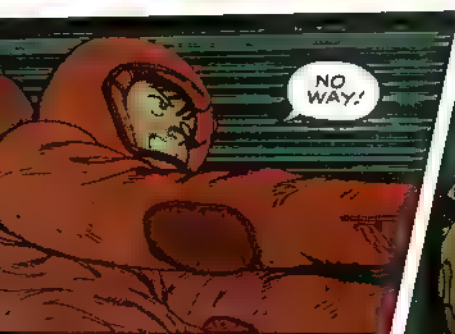


FOLLOW  
ME!

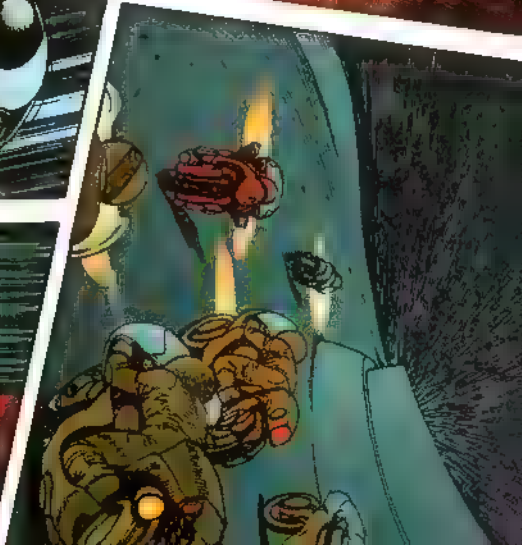
TETSUO,  
YOU  
CLOWN!

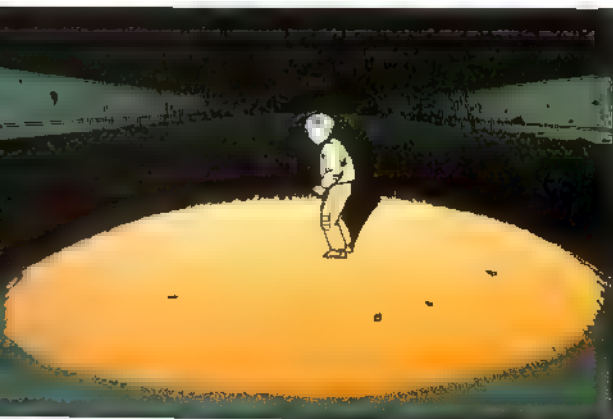
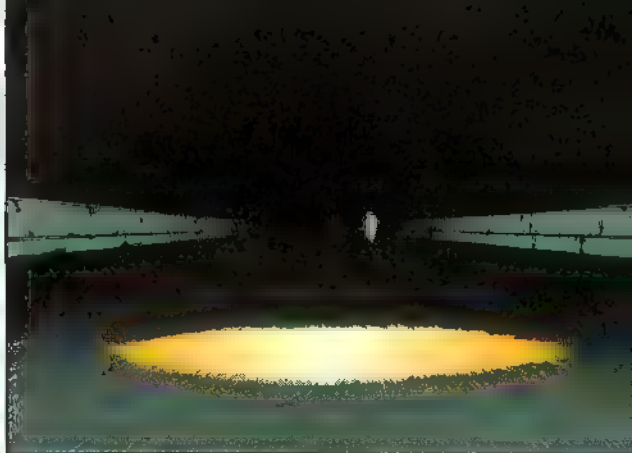
WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK  
YOU'RE  
DOING?

TAKING  
THE LEAD,  
KANEDA.  
THIS TIME  
YOU  
FOLLOW  
ME.

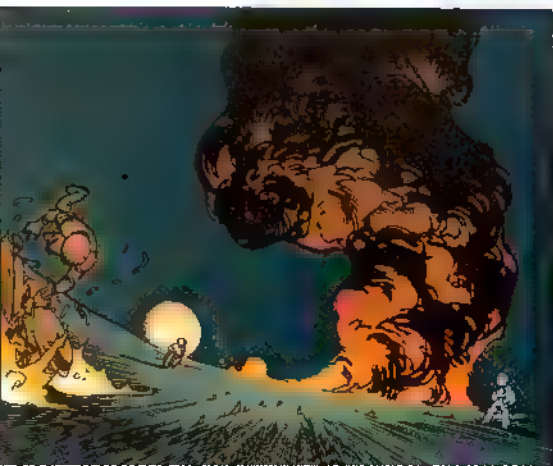
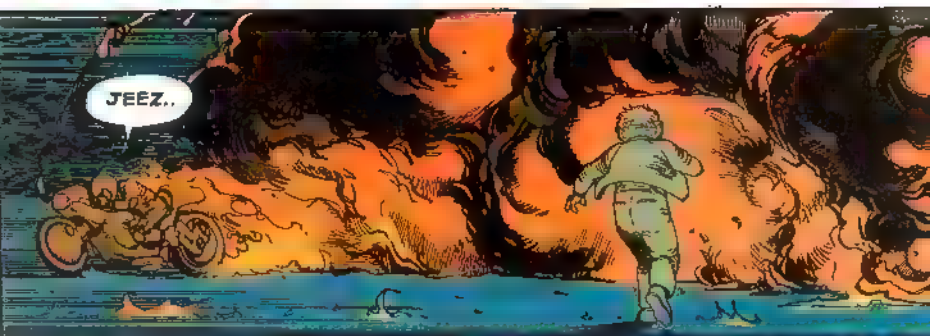


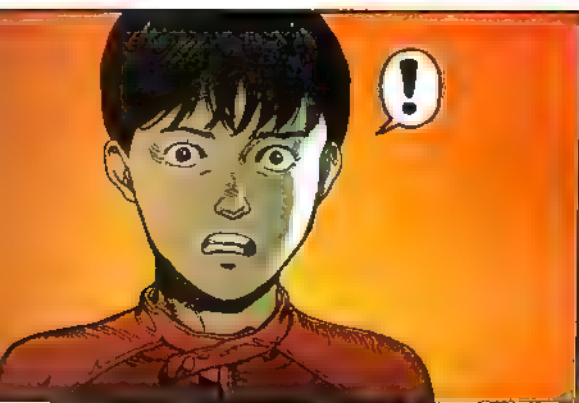
NO  
WAY!



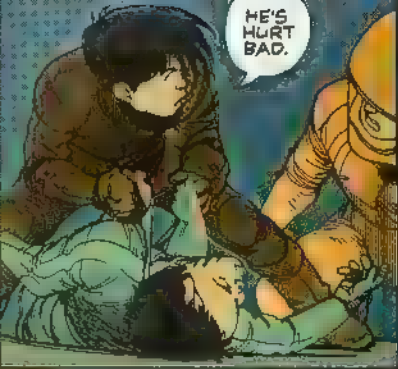


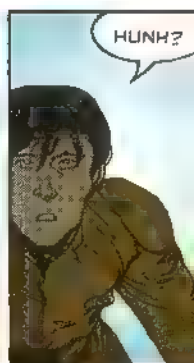














COPS--?

SOLDIERS--?

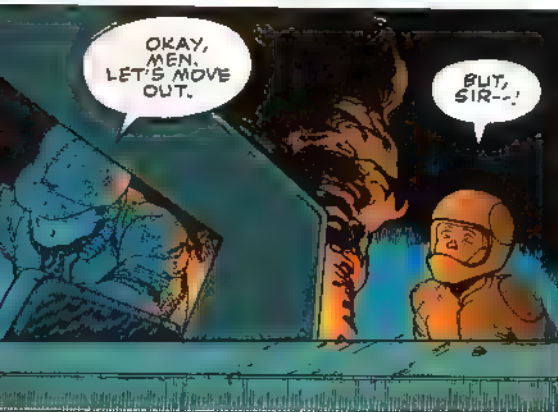
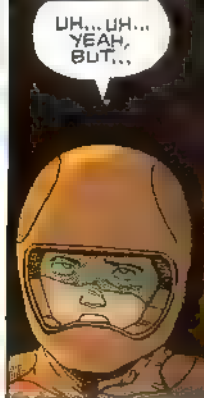
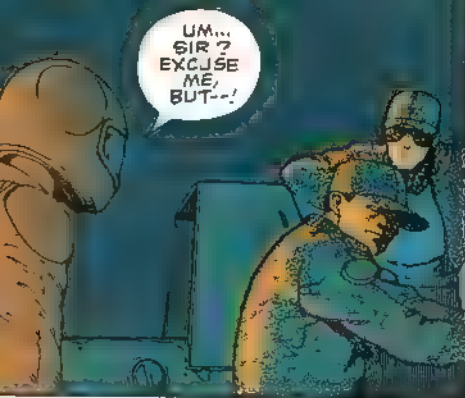
MAYBE  
THEY CAN  
HELP...



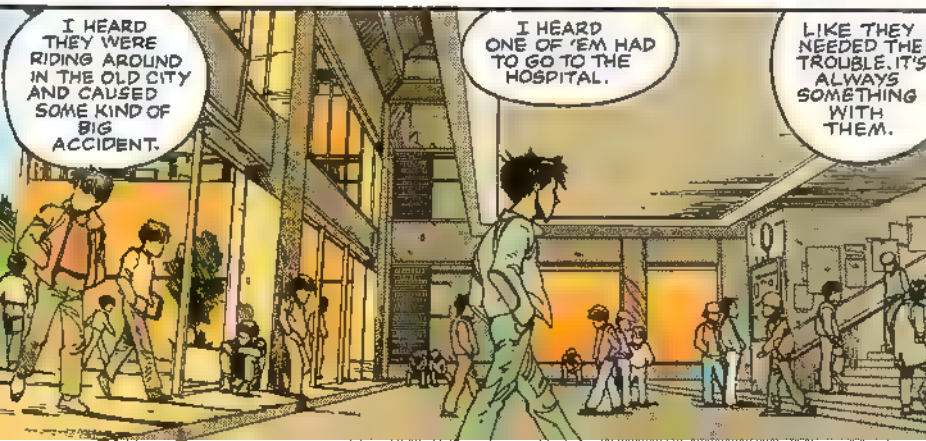
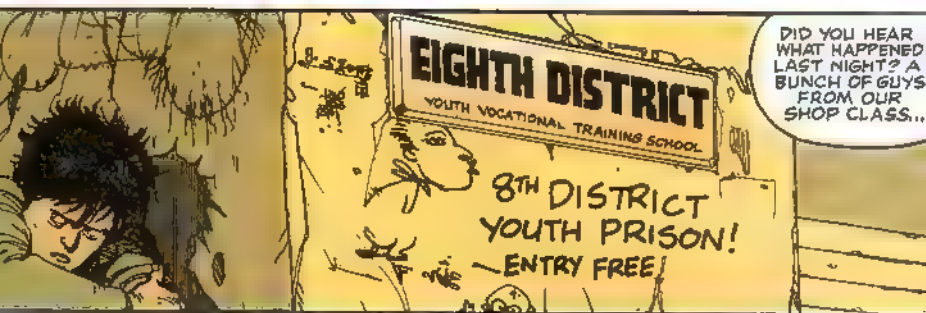
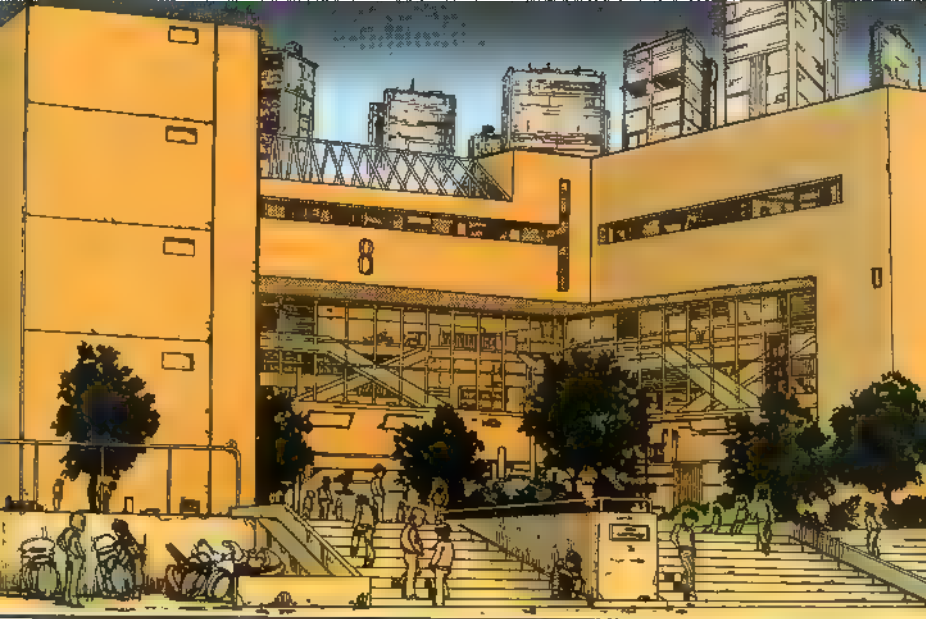
NOPE. THERE'S  
NO SIGN OF... IT WAS  
JUST A BUNCH OF  
KIDS. THERE WAS  
SOME KIND OF  
ACCIDENT.

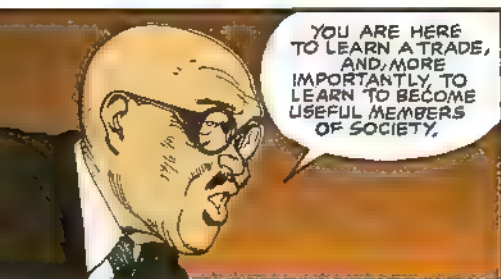
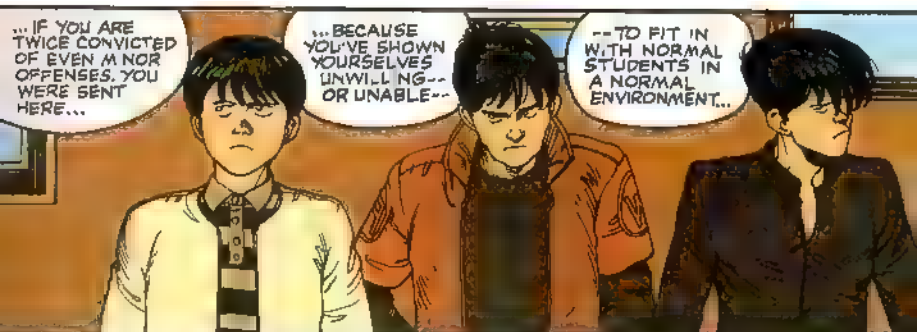
YES,  
SIR.



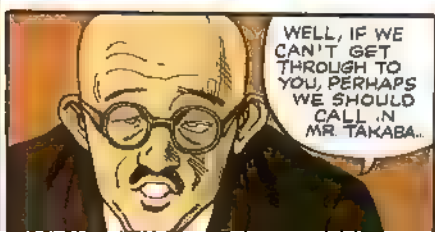
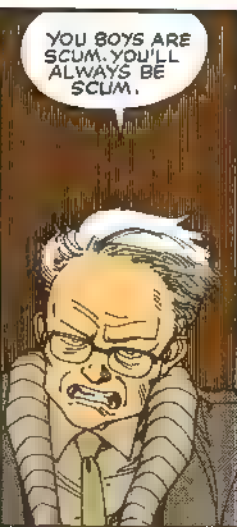
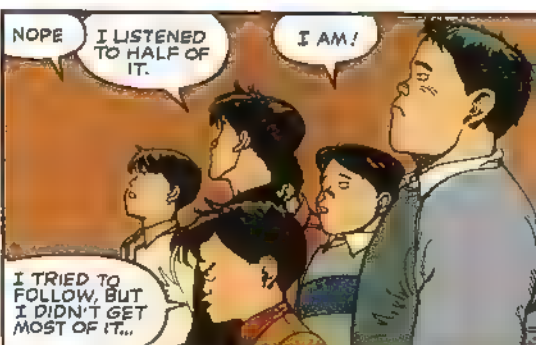
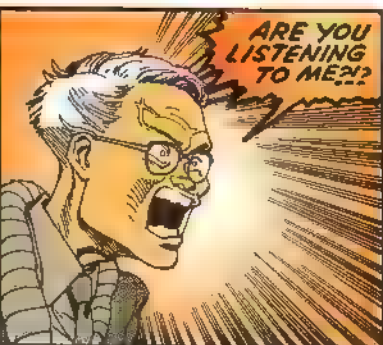
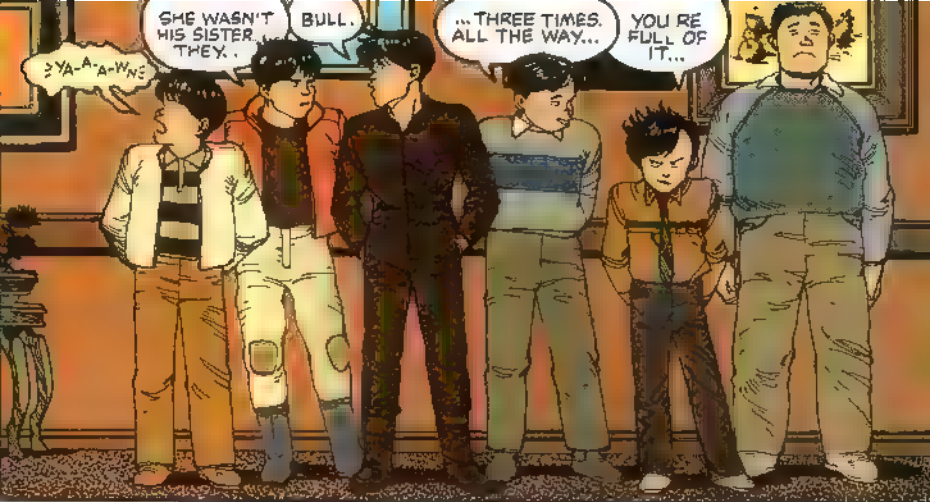


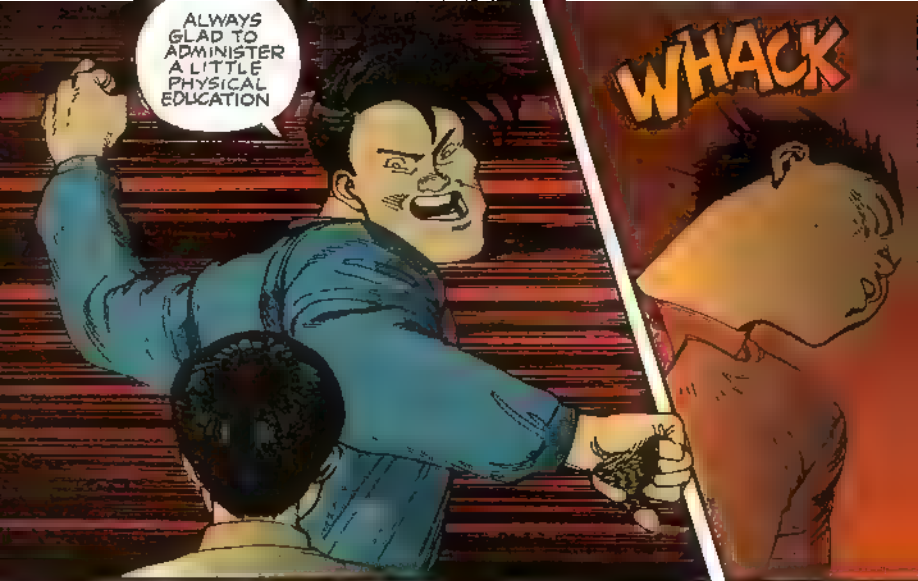




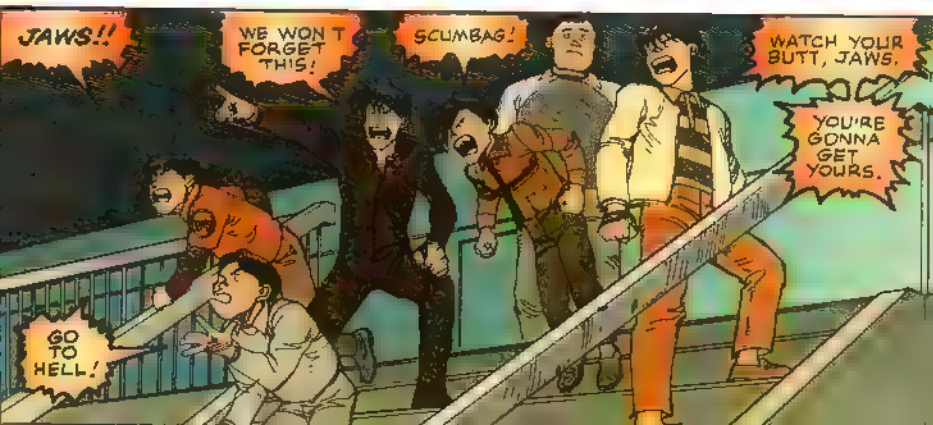
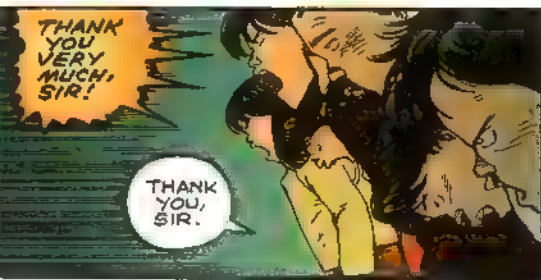










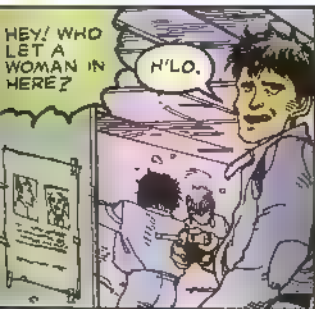




DON'T LET THEM SCARE YOU. WE DON'T HAVE A THING TO WORRY ABOUT.

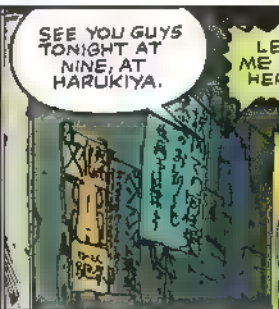


WE HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING THEY CAN TAKE US TO COURT FOR.



HEY! WHO LET A WOMAN IN HERE?

H'LO.



SEE YOU GUYS TONIGHT AT NINE, AT HARUKIYA.

LET ME AT HER.



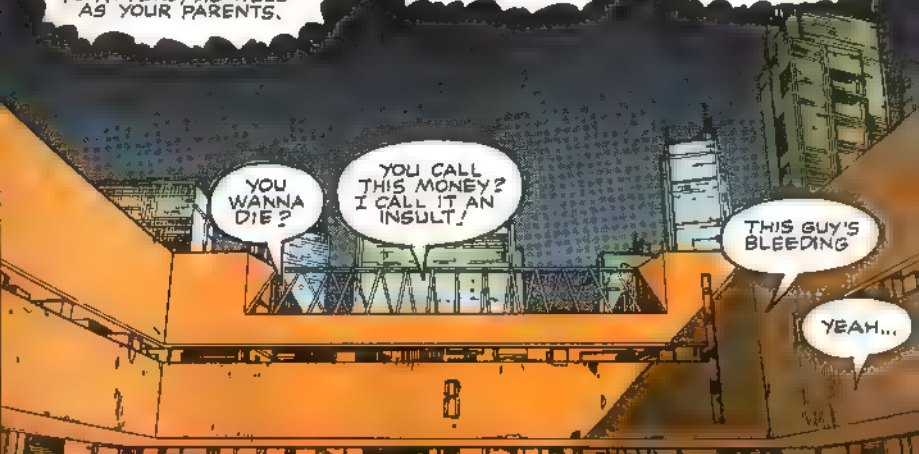
DON'T FORGET, WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT HOSPITAL TETSUO'S IN SO WE CAN VISIT HIM

OKAY.

THE EIGHTH DISTRICT TRADE FAIR WILL BE HELD ON THE FOURTH OF NEXT MONTH. WE EXPECT REPRESENTATIVES FROM SEVERAL FACTORIES TO ATTEND, AS WELL AS YOUR PARENTS.

REMEMBER, THIS WILL BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF YOUR OWN WORK...

ALUMN OF THIS SCHOOL WHO NOW WORK FOR MAJOR CORPORATIONS WILL ALSO BE COMING...



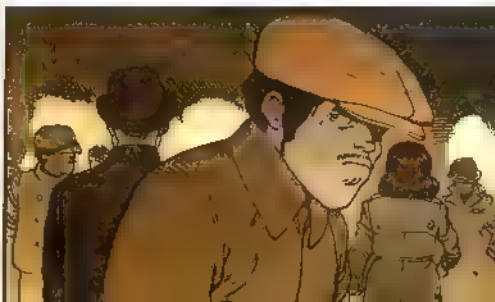
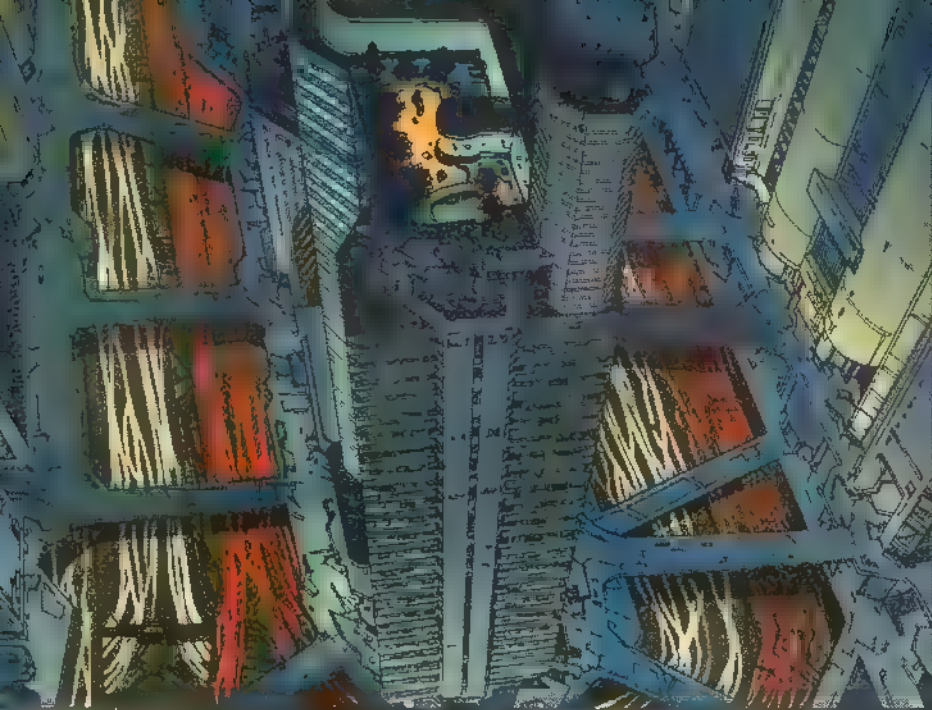
YOU WANNA DIE?

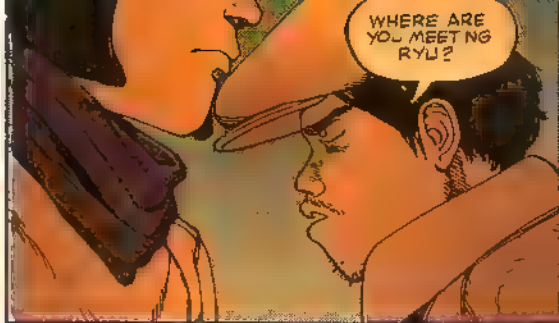
YOU CALL THIS MONEY? I CALL IT AN INSULT!

THIS GUY'S BLEEDING

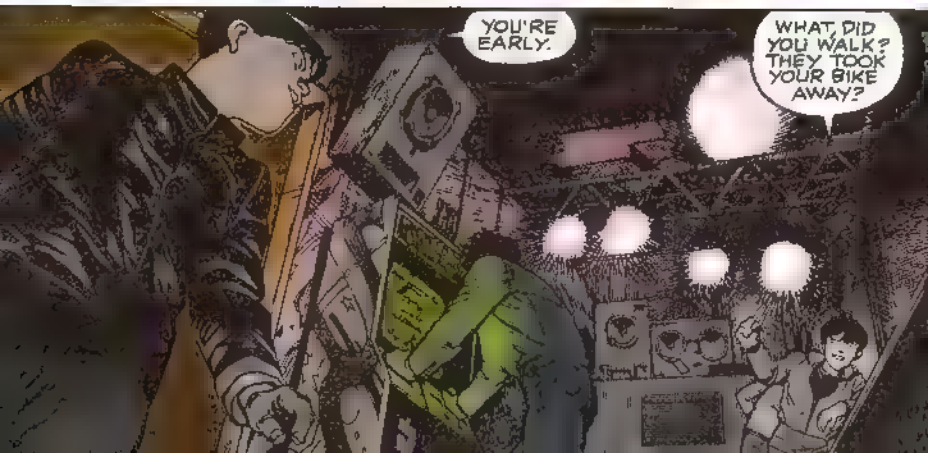
YEAH...

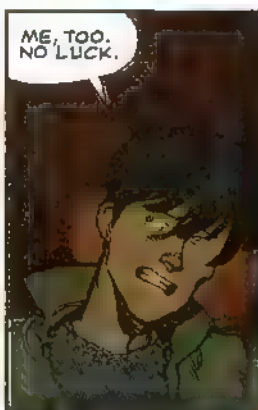
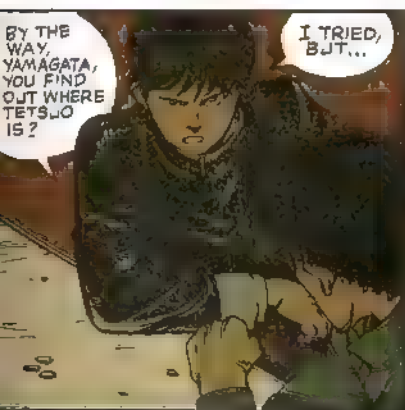
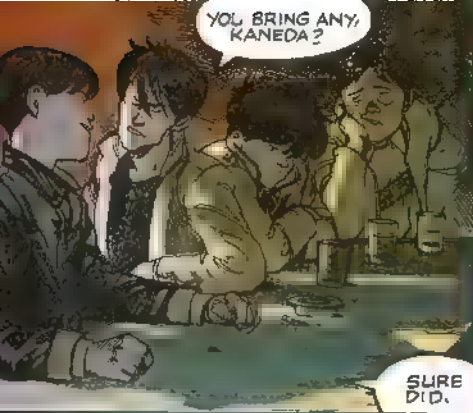






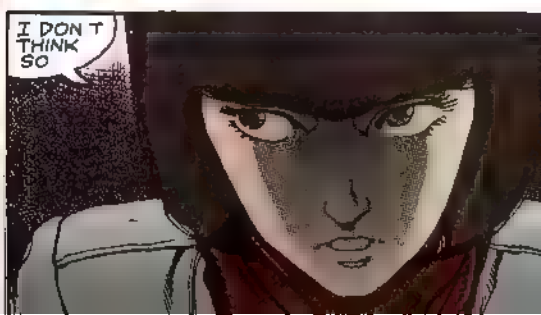


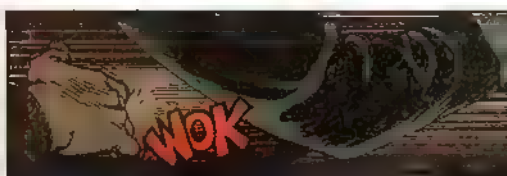
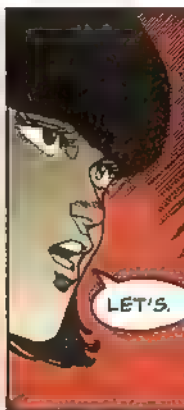
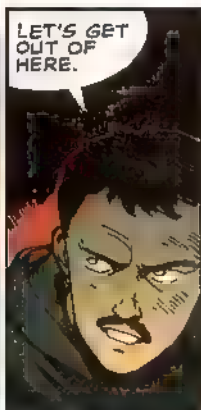


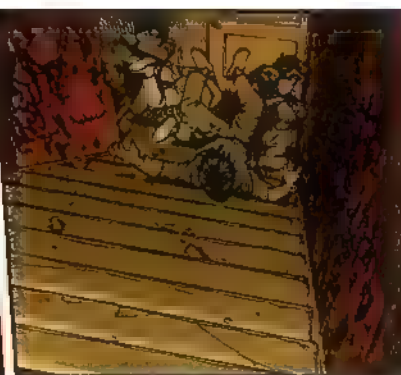
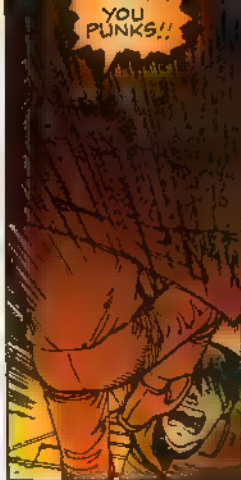




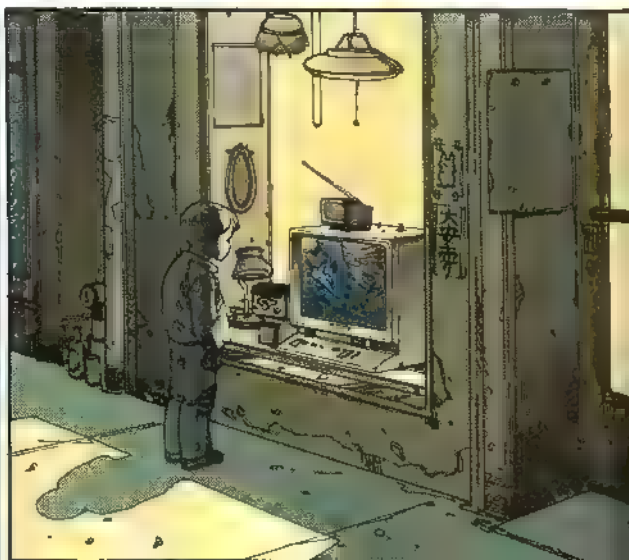


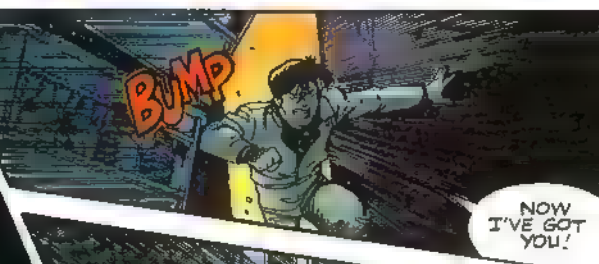
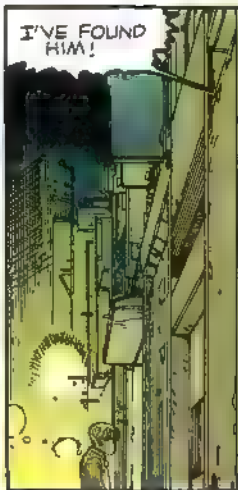
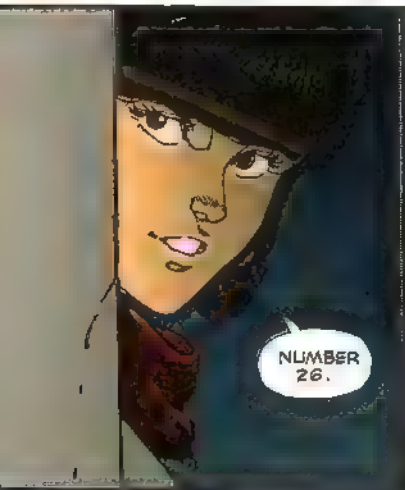
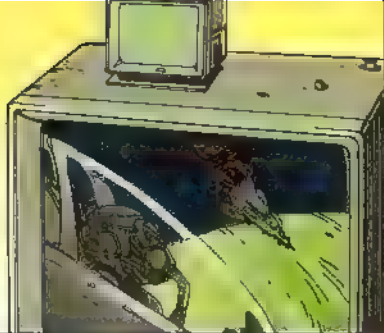
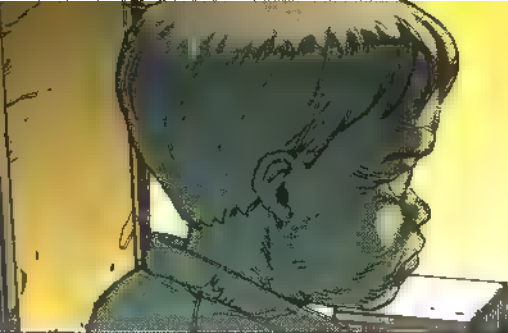
















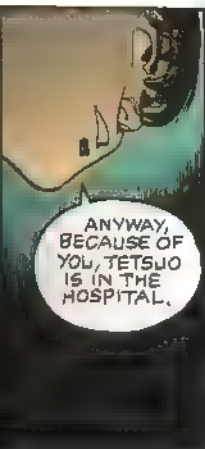
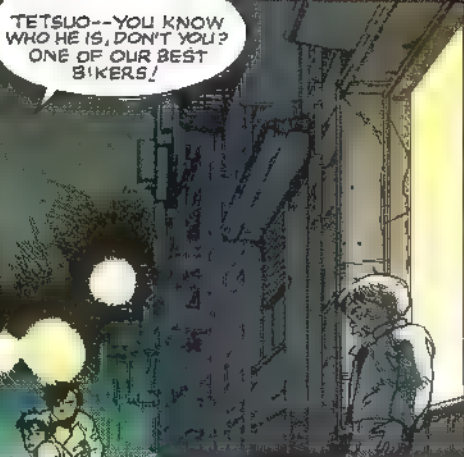


KANEDA...?



BECAUSE  
OF YOU...

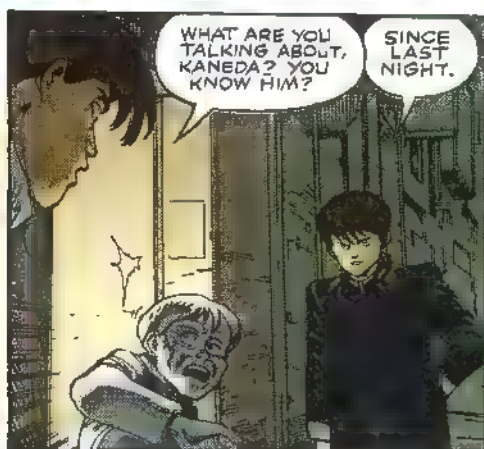
TETSUO--YOU KNOW  
WHO HE IS, DON'T YOU?  
ONE OF OUR BEST  
BIKERS!



ANYWAY,  
BECAUSE OF  
YOU, TETSUO  
IS IN THE  
HOSPITAL.

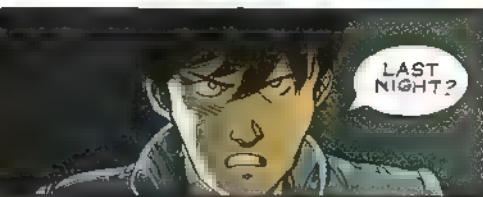


HE'S MY FRIEND, SO  
I OWE YOU FOR  
WHAT YOU DID TO  
HIM. AND I'M  
GONNA PAY YOU  
BACK, RIGHT  
NOW.

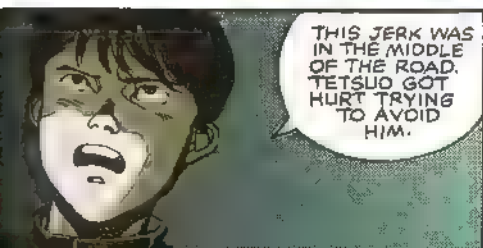


WHAT ARE YOU  
TALKING ABOUT,  
KANEDA? YOU  
KNOW HIM?

SINCE  
LAST  
NIGHT.



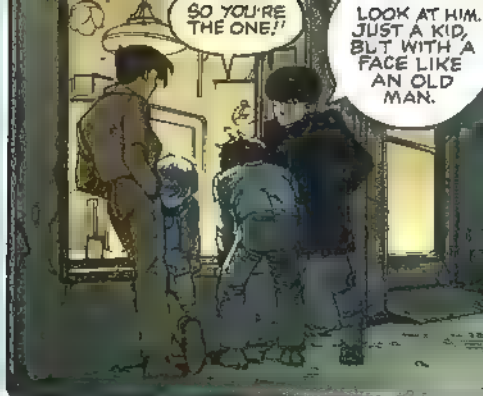
LAST  
NIGHT?



THIS JERK WAS  
IN THE MIDDLE  
OF THE ROAD.  
TETSUO GOT  
HURT TRYING  
TO AVOID  
HIM.

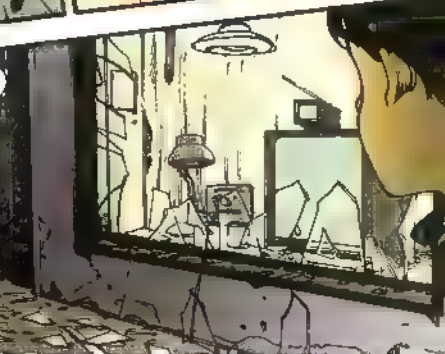
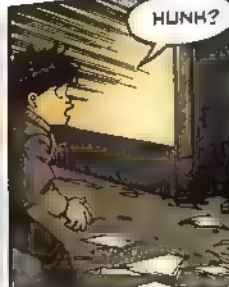


WHAT--?!

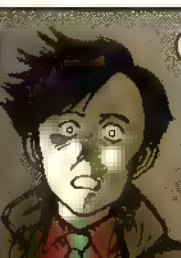




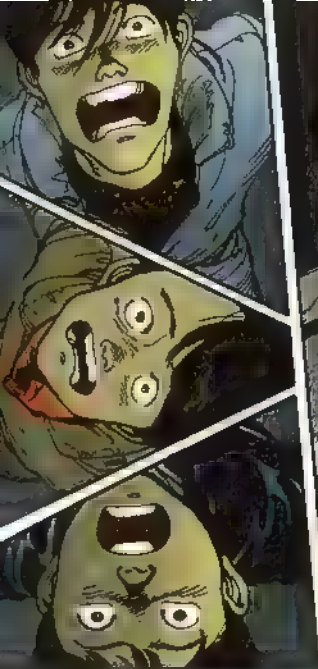


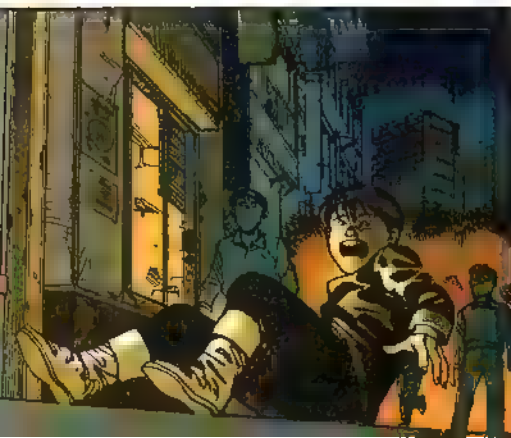


THE  
G.R.L.,  
THE ONE  
FROM  
HARUKIYA.




YAA  
YAA  
YAA










LOOK!  
SMOKE AT  
9 O'CLOCK!



LOOKS LIKE IT'S  
IN THE SEVENTEENTH  
DISTRICT.

EMERGENCY!  
EMERGENCY!



THIS IS *STF 14*.  
WE'VE SPOTTED  
A FIRE IN THE  
SEVENTEENTH  
DISTRICT.

MAYBE  
CAUSED BY AN  
EXPLOSION.

WE'RE  
GOING IN TO  
TAKE A  
LOOK.

AN EXPLOSION?!

IN THE SEVENTEENTH DISTRICT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

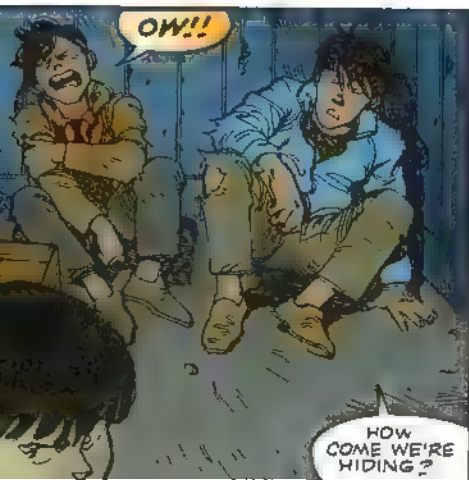
ONE OF OUR PATROLS IS ON ITS WAY.

WE'LL HAVE THE DETAILS SOON ENOUGH.

DO YOU THINK NUMBER 26 WAS BEHIND IT?

IT'S BEEN OVER THIRTY HOURS SINCE HE ESCAPED

SOON HE'LL BE AT CRITICAL





BEING A J.D.  
IS A REAL  
PAIN IN THE  
ASS.



WHAT'S THE  
STORY WITH  
THAT LITTLE  
WEIRDO?



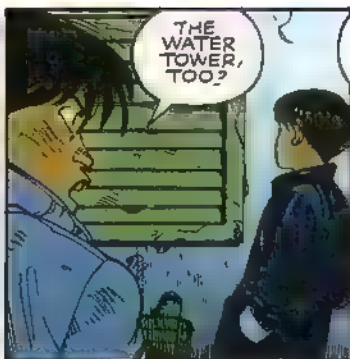
WHAT DO  
YOU THINK,  
KANEDA? DID  
HE REALLY  
DESTROY THE  
WINDOW AND  
THE WATER  
TOWER?



HOW  
SHOULD I  
KNOW?



THE  
WATER  
TOWER,  
TOO?



DID YOU  
THINK IT WAS  
JUST A  
COINCIDENCE?



WAIT A  
MINUTE--  
THAT  
GIRL!



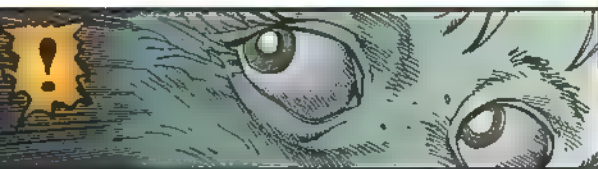
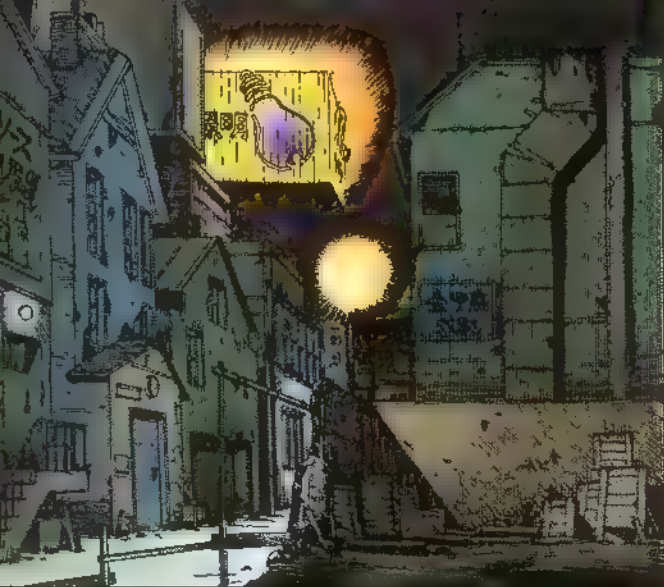
I BET  
SHE  
KNOWS!

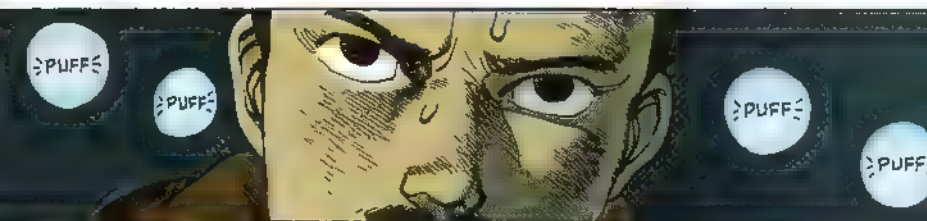


YOU  
GUYS  
WAIT  
HERE!

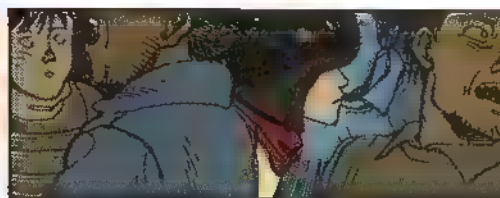
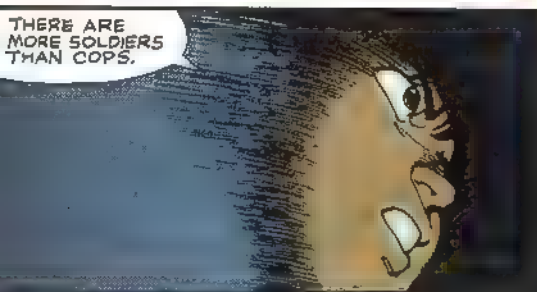
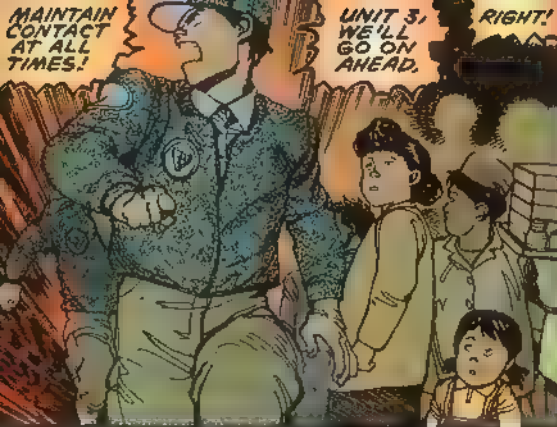


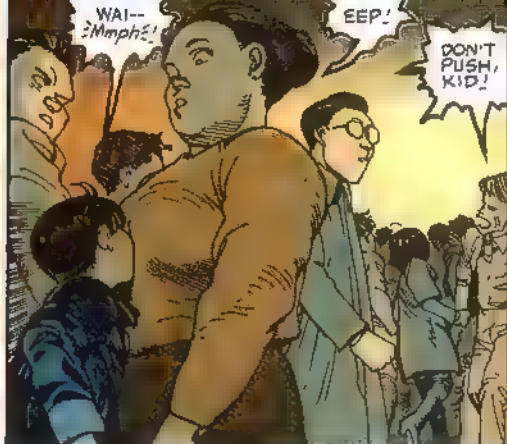
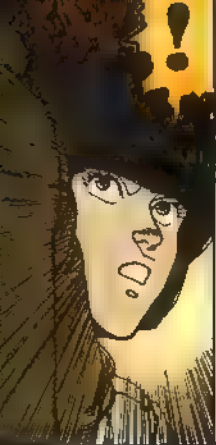
HEY!!  
COME BACK  
HERE!







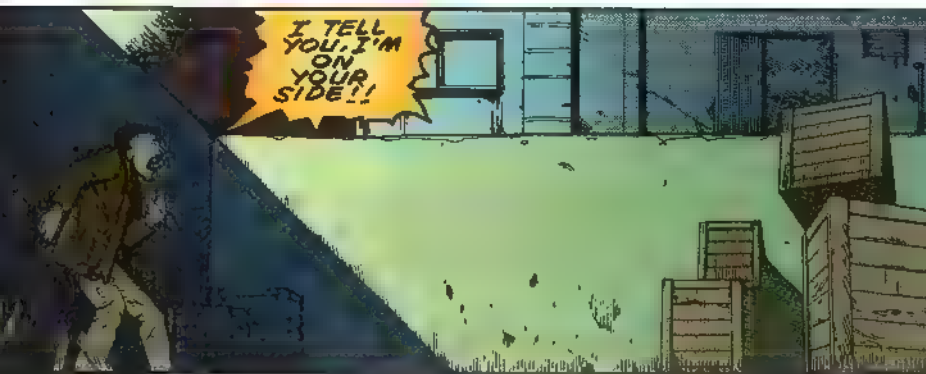






YIPE!

STOP IT! JUST COOL OFF, WOULD YOU?





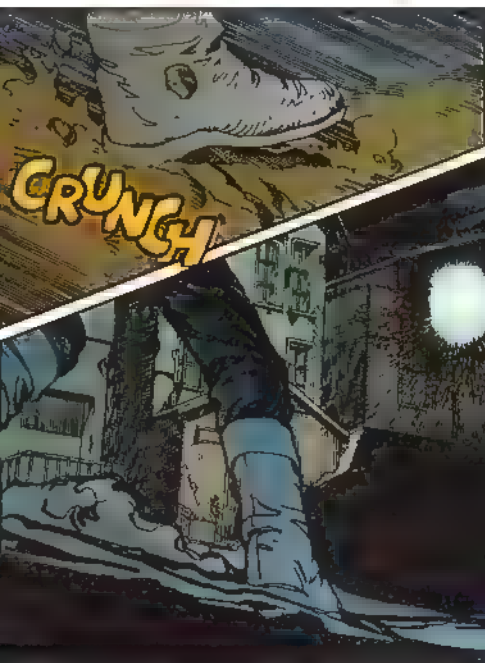
YOU'RE NOT SAFE  
HERE. THE AREA'S  
SWARMING WITH  
PEOPLE WHO'RE  
AFTER YOU.



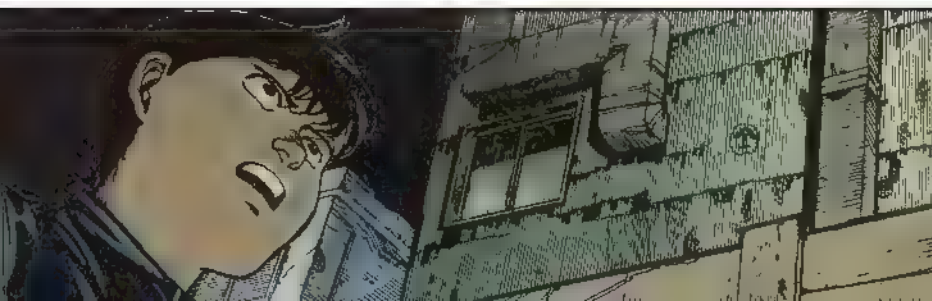
ARE  
THEY  
WEARING  
WHITE  
COATS?

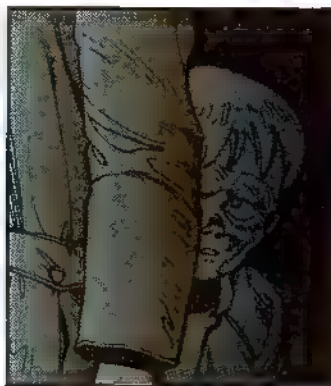


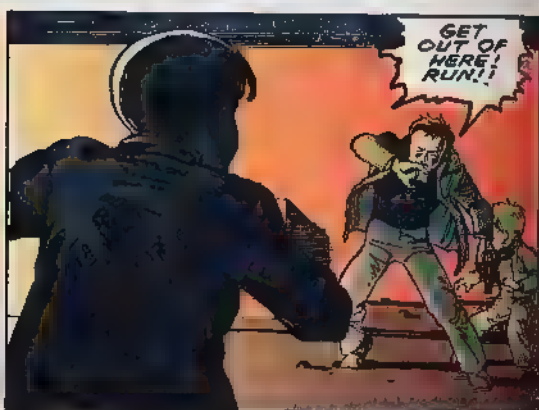
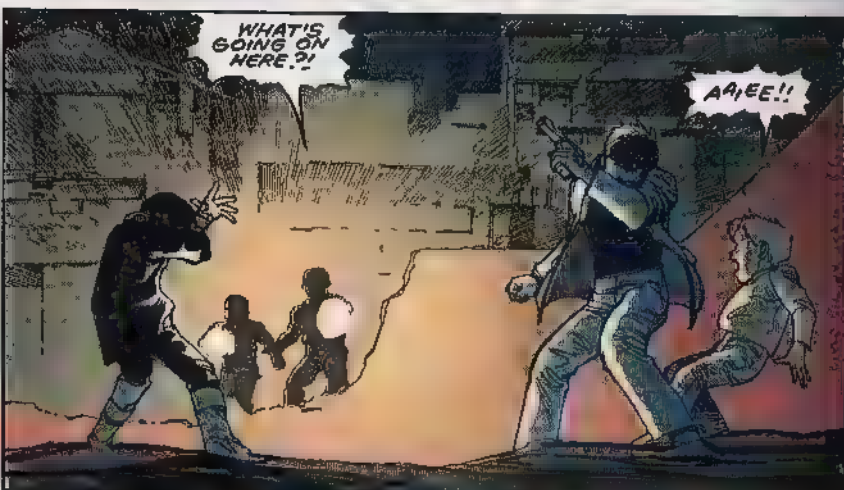
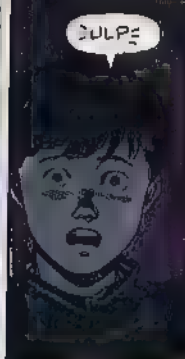
YES, AND  
THERE  
ARE A  
LOT OF  
THEM.



CRUNCH







NEXT ISSUE: **PURSUIT!**



## AKIRA & OTOMO

In 1970, Japan's comic magazine industry was divided roughly into two types of publications. One was for juvenile readers, from children up to middle teens. The other was for an adult audience consisting mainly of young salaried workers. **Kodansha, Ltd.**, one of the country's largest publishers, felt that there was an intermediate group being missed: high school and college students, a readership sensitive to new trends developing in film, music, fashion, all forms of the arts and entertainment.

**Young Magazine**, a 300-page biweekly, was designed for this potential audience. But finding exactly the right material to capture the imagination of a new readership proved difficult. For two years **Young Magazine** struggled. During this time, it attracted the interest of artist/writer **Katsuhiro Otomo**.

Since the publication of his first work in 1973—adapting the short novel **Mateo Falcone** by **Prosper Merimee**—Otomo's reputation had steadily grown, based on a number of unique and intense comics short stories (20 to 30 pages in length rather than the hundreds, sometimes thousands, that an ongoing saga can run in Japanese comics). Some of these dealt

with fantasy and science-fiction themes, many with science-fiction contemporary drama; all had a visual spirit and rhythm that reflected Otomo's feelings for new wave cinema and modern jazz.

With the publication of **Domu** in 1983, Otomo enjoyed his greatest success. This 230-page comic—which centers upon a conflict between two dwellers in a modern day high-rise apartment complex, an old man and young girl, each possessing deadly psychic powers—became a best seller and went on to win Japan's science-fiction Grand Prix for story of the year (previously this prize had only been awarded to novels).

The success of **Domu** and reactions to an earlier work—the still to be completed series, **Fireball**—dealing with a human versus mega-computer theme, led Otomo to consider doing an even larger scale science-fiction story.

The story was **Akira**. And because he liked the new direction it was taking, **Young Magazine** was where Otomo chose to present this major work, which, when complete, would be a six-volume graphic novel.

Reader reaction to the first 25-page segment of the series to appear in **Young Magazine** was overwhelming. The material broke with tradition and touched a nerve. Circulation began to rise. The new audience had been found. Today there are about half a dozen titles like **Young Magazine**. **Young Magazine** and two others have a circulation of over one million.

Traditionally in Japan, a

comics series first appears in installments in a weekly or biweekly magazine. When sufficient material has been published, the series is then collected into a book edition. Usually this would be about 240 pages and in a format that is a little bit larger but still similar in size to an American paperback book. Here too, **Akira** broke with tradition.

The first Japanese book edition was in a format closer in dimension to the magazine size (about the height and width of one of our comic books) and contained 360 pages. The title and author's name appeared on the cover in English, no Japanese lettering was used. The format and style grew out of Otomo's own concept of making the book edition similar in feeling to American comics. Book designer **Akira Saito** worked closely with Otomo to achieve this goal. Initial fears from Kodansha's Sales Division over the wisdom of the design and packaging of the book faded as advance orders began to pour in. What was originally stated to be a 30,000 print run eventually shot up to nearly 300,000 copies. The first book edition of **Akira** became a number one bestseller.

That was in September of 1984. Three other volumes have come out each year since then. All have had the same sort of phenomenal reception. The fifth volume is complete, and will shortly see print. With print runs now at about half a million copies each, the completed saga of **Akira** will have a total of two and a half million copies in print.

And that's not really the end.

Otomo, in addition to his comics work, is a designer of TV commercials for clients such as Suntory, Canon, and Honda, and acted as director, scenarist, designer, and illustrator on an animated film of **Akira** that has been playing in the United States this year.

Otomo has also been very involved in the production of the English language version of **Akira** since this is the first time that his work has appeared in the United States in translation and also the first time it has appeared completely in color. His own studio, **MASH ROOM Co., Ltd.**, prepares the adjusted artwork from which we reproduce Japanese comics are originally done to read from right to left and their dialogue balloons and sound effects are designed for lettering that reads vertically. Through Kodansha's editors in New York and Tokyo with whom we work, Otomo sees the material at each stage of development, providing notes on the script adaptation by **Jo Duffy** and furnishing color guides to **Steve Oliff**, who was his personal choice for colorist on the project.

This concern for all phases in the production of his work is certainly one of the factors in making **Akira** the phenomenon that it was for Japanese readers. The other factors are surely the artistry and excitement that is brought to the telling of the story. Now, thanks to **Katsuhiro Otomo** and **Kodansha, Ltd.**, American readers can at long last share in that phenomenon.

**KATSUHIRO OTOMO**

writer + illustrator

**YASUMITSU SUETAKE**

chief assistant to Mr. Otomo

**MAKOTO SHIOSAKI**

**SATOSHI TAKABATAKE**

assistants to Mr. Otomo

**HIROSHI HIRATA**

designer Akira's dog

**AKIRA SAITO**

designer Kodansha edition

Kodansha Ltd

**YOKO UMEZAWA**

with **LINDA M. YORK**

translator

**KOICHI YURI**

editor Kodansha edition

**NORIYUKI OKAZAKI**

**YUKA ANDO**

editorial coordinators

Epic Comics

**JO DUFFY**

english adaptation

**STEVE OLIFF**

colorist

**MICHAEL HIGGINS**

letterer

**HECTOR COLLAZO**

**VINCE EVANS**

**ROBERT CAROSELLA**

production

**MARK CHIARELLO**

editorial assistant Epic edition

**ARCHIE GOODWIN**

editor Epic edition



**T**he Third World War began in 1992 with the explosion of a new type bomb over Japan. Thirty-eight years later, the world is at last recovering. But in Neo-Tokyo, near ground zero of the original destruction, a strange encounter takes place. Kaneda— young, restless, committed to defying authority— nearly runs down a child with his motorcycle. A child with the wizened face of an old man. A child with powers beyond physical science. The child is Number 26. He is the harbinger of deadly events that sweep Kaneda into a struggle between powerful and secret forces. At the center of this struggle is something feared and prized for the potential to shake the recovering world. Someone or something known only as . . . AKIRA.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA



This scan produced by:

X-FUTURE

I love um

I buy um

I preserve um

# AKIRA

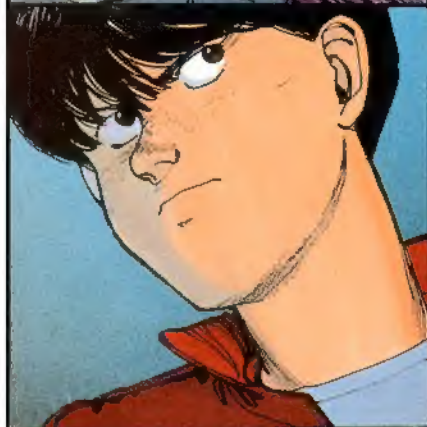
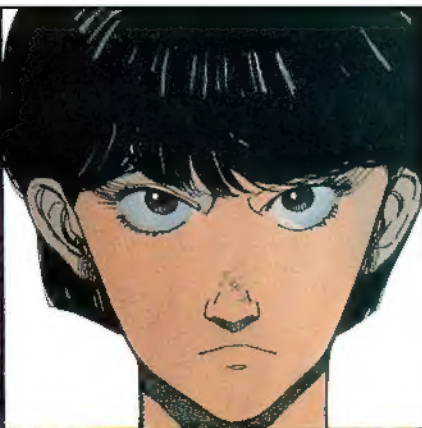
BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

**BOOK ONE**





This is number 1247 of one thousand five hundred  
in the limited hardcover edition of  
**KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S AKIRA: BOOK ONE**





# AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO





